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CHEAP REPOSITORY.

SUNDAY READING.

PROPHEESIES

RELATING TO
JESUS CHRIST.

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PROPHEESIES, &c.

IF our weak and debased nature did not make us feel our own inability to raise ourselves to that state of purity from whence Adam fell, and render us thereby sensible of the unspeakable goodness and mercy of God in giving us his only begotten blessed Son to cleanse us by his blood, and deliver us from the bondage of Satan, the prophecies of those holy men, who lived many ages before the birth of our Lord, would not only demonstrate the truth of his mission, but convince us of its importance to the whole human race. As these prophecies are scattered in different parts of the Old Testament, I shall, for the satisfaction of the reader, select, after a pious and learned divine, some of the most remarkable for the present Sunday Reading; and I must first observe, that the whole service of
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the Jewish worship, sacrifices, oblations, &c. was one continued type or emblem of our Lord's Gospel. The limits of my plan will not permit me to enter minutely into these; I shall content myself therefore with citing those which God delivered by his own, or the mouths of his prophets.

The earliest prophecy concerning Jesus Christ is found in the third chapter of Genesis; where, after the fall of our first parents God tells Eve, that "her seed should bruise the head of the serpent." This was strictly fulfilled in the birth of Christ, who was born of a woman, a virgin, and sent forth by God that he might destroy the works of the devil, who lie hid in the serpent that tempted Eve. He might truly therefore, in the language of prophecy be said to "bruise the head of the serpent."

The next incontrovertable prophecy of Christ is in the eighth chapter of Genesis, where God tells Abraham, "that in his seed shall all the nations of the world be blessed." This clearly points to Christ, who was to be derived in a long course of generations from Abraham: for which reason he is called in many parts of Scripture, "the Son of Abraham." The same promise was also given to Isaac, the son of Abraham, and to Jacob his grandson, "In thy seed shall all nations be blessed."

Moses, in the eighteenth chapter of Deuteronomy prophees of Christ: "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee of thy brethren, like unto me, and to him shall ye hearken."

arken." This evidently means Christ; for though there were several prophets after Moses, as Isaiah, Jeremiah, and others, none of them instituted a new religion, or performed such numerous miracles to prove the truth of their doctrine, but our Lord Jesus. The Psalms of David are full of prophecies concerning Christ; his being chosen out of the Jewish nation to be the Saviour and king of Israel, is foretold under the emblem of David, in the eighty-ninth Psalm. "Then thou speakest in vision to thy Holy One, and saidst, I have laid help upon one that is mighty; I have exalted one chosen out of the people, and will make him my first-born, higher than the kings of the earth."

The children singing his triumph when he entered the temple, is mentioned in the eighth Psalm, second verse: "Out of the mouth of sucklings thou hast ordained strength." A pious writer observes, that the very words of their song is cited in Psalm cxviii. "Save now I beseech thee" (which in the Hebrew is Hosannah) "O Lord; blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." The rage of the scribes and pharisees on this account, is intimated in the same Psalm: "The babes and sucklings cried out and did still, or silence the enemy and the avenger." Our Lord's persecution by princes and people, is declared in the second Psalm: "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take council together against the Lord and against his anointed." This was strongly fulfilled when Herod, Pontus Pilate, and the people, both Jews and

and Gentiles, rose up against our Lord, and put him to death.

His bitter reproaches and sufferings, as also the manner of his death, is foretold in the twenty-second and forty-ninth Psalms. In the first of these David, by way of emblem, in prophecy, speaks the words of Christ upon the cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" and again, "They pierced my hands and my feet; they parted my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture." In the sixty-ninth Psalm his cruel treatment is farther described: "Reproach hath broken my heart, I am full of heaviness; they gave me also gall for my meat; in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink." A perusal of the twenty-seventh chapter of the Gospel of Matthew, and the nineteenth of John, will shew the reader how exactly all these things were fulfilled.

The resurrection of Christ from the dead is foretold in the sixteenth Psalm: "For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell;" that is, in the state of the dead—"neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption;" that is, not to remain in the grave long enough to be subject to rottenness. His ascension to heaven, attended with angels, to triumph over the devils, his receiving gifts from the Father, and distributing of them to men, are foretold in Psalm cxviii. "The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels; the Lord is among them. Thou hast ascended on high; thou hast led captivity captive; thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord might

might dwell among them;" meaning prophets and apostles, for the ministry of the gospel, that God might dwell among men who were before rebellious against him.

In the second Psalm our Lord's resurrection and exaltation to the kingdom of God is described under the peculiar character of the Son of God. "I have set my King upon my holy hill of Zion; and I will declare the decree; thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee," again: "ask of me and I will give the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." A very learned and pious man*, after whom I have selected some of the above passages, observes, that in some of the Psalms cited, we should not have known that Christ, or the Messiah was intended, if Christ himself, or the Apostles had not referred to them for this purpose; though he at the same time adds, that some of them are so evident, that the ancient Jews applied them to the Messiah; and that we cannot but apply them to him, because they cannot be applied to David, or to any other person.

The next prophet who speaks of Christ is Isaiah, who is called the evangelical, or gospel prophet, because he foretells the greatest variety of events that relate to him. In the seventh chapter, that he shall be born of a virgin. "A virgin shall conceive and bare a Son, and shall call his name Im-

* Dr. Watts.

manuel;"

manuel ;" which name signifies GOD WITH US. He foretells also, that he shall be of the family of Jesse, or David, who shall be king of Israel, that his name shall be *The Mighty God*, and his kingdom shall stand for ever. Isaiah xi. "In that day there shall be a Root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek." Again; "Unto us a child is born; unto us a Son is given; the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called WONDERFUL, COUNSELLOR, THE MIGHTY GOD, THE EVERLASTING FATHER, THE PRINCE OF PEACE. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end; upon the throne of David and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgement, and justice, from henceforth even for ever."

His rejection by the Jews and his being received by the Gentiles is very forceably described in the eighth chapter. "He shall be a sanctuary," that is, a refuge for mankind: "but for a stumbling block, and rock of offence to both the houses of Israel;" meaning the two tribes which made up the Jewish nation. In the forty-ninth chapter of Isaiah shews that he shall be received by the Gentiles, as their Saviour and King. "He shall be a light to the Gentiles, and salvation to the ends of the earth. To him whom man despiseth, to him whom the nation (meaning the Jewish nation) abhorreth, kings shall look and arise; princes also shall worship." This is supposed to allude to the kings of the heathens, as the Jews had no kings who worshipped him.

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He In the eleventh chapter, Isaiah speaks thus: "And
 ly of ere shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse,
 , that and a branch shall grow out of his roots; and the
 king spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of
 t day wisdom and understanding, and the spirit of coun-
 nd for all and might, the spirit of knowledge, and of the
 entiles ear of the Lord." This prophecy was evidently
 unto filled in Christ Jesus, to whom, we are told by
 upon John, "God giveth not his Spirit by measure;"
 VON and, "that in him are hid all the treasures of wis-
 The dom and knowledge."

O The prophet in the eleventh chapter, describes
 shall a commission for preaching the gospel; "He shall
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 with te the earth with the rod of his mouth, with the
 n for reath of his lips he shall slay the wicked." In the
 received sixty-first chapter, "The Spirit of the Lord God is
 n the on me; because the Lord hath anointed me to
 at is, reach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent
 lock, e to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim
 ewish liberty to the captives, and the opening of the pri-
 shews ce to them that are bound; to proclaim the ac-
 their ceptable year of the Lord, and the day of the ven-
 o the dance of our God; to comfort all that mourn," &c.
 the What joy, what comfort, is there continued in this
 kings glorious prophecy; and how evidently was it ful-
 hip." led in Jesus Christ, when he published pardon for
 hea- sin, and everlasting life to those who believe in him,
 him. and repent of their sins! Nor are his miracles of
 In healing which he wrought less forceably described by
 the prophet, nor more strikingly verified. "Be-
 hold your God will come and save you: then the
 eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of
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the deaf shall be unstopped: then shall the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing:" Isaiah the xxxvth. How exactly consonant to the truth, though predicted so many ages before! that Christ should have a fore-runner to prepare his way, which fore-runner was John the Baptist, was foretold by the prophet in the eleventh chapter. "The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a high-way for our God: and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, all flesh shall see it together." The meaning of which is that the glory of the Lord should be made visible to fleshly eyes by dwelling bodily in the Lord Jesus.

The fifty third chapter of Isaiah is recommended by a learned and pious writer, to be perused with particular attention; in that admirable chapter says he, "the sufferings of Christ, his meekness and patience under the contempt, reproaches, and persecution he met with at his death, as an atonement for sin; his being numbered among vile sinners; his burial with the rich; his resurrection, exaltation, intercession are expressed in language so exceedingly plain, that it seems sufficient to convince any honest infidel or heathen, and die actually," continues he, "convince that wild atheistical nobleman the Earl of Rochester in the language, of the truth of the Gospel, when he compared the prophecy of Isaiah with the xxviii and following chapter of the Gospel of St. Matthew, and he became a christian penitent."

The prophet Jeremiah speaks less frequently of Christ, but has some very striking prophecies concerning him: that in the second chapter for example. "Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous branch; and a king shall reign and prosper, and execute judgement and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely, and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS."

Under the character of David, who was both a shepherd and a king, the prophet Ezekiel foretold many things of Christ in the thirty-fourth chapter. "And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David: And I, the Lord, will be their God, and my servant David a prince among them: And I will make with them a covenant of peace." Again, verse 21st, "I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, I will gather them from every side, and bring them into their own land; and I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel, and one king shall be king over them all."

Our Lord Jesus Christ is evidently that great shepherd who will in the end gather them, and reign over them, as described in the prophecy.

The prophet Daniel describes our Lord as, "the Son of Man who came with the clouds of heaven; and there were given him dominion, and glory, and a king-

a kingdom, that all people and nations should see him; and his dominion is an everlasting dominion Dan. chap. xii. He has likewise several other prophecies concerning him.

The prophet Micah tells the very place where Christ should be born. Micah, chap. v. "Thou Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me, that is to be the ruler in Israel, whose going forth have been from old from eternity." This prophecy was fulfilled when our Lord was brought forth in the city Bethlehem, by Mary his mother, who was of the family of David.

The prophecies of Zechariah are in general looked upon to be rather obscure, but in what relates to Christ he is perfectly clear: he tells us in chap. vi. "Thus speaketh the Lord of Hosts," saying, "Behold the man whose name is the branch: he shall build the temple of the Lord, he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne, and he shall be a priest upon his throne, and the counsel of peace shall be between them both: and they that are afar off, shall come and build in the temple of the Lord." The prophet informs us, that this person whom foregoing prophets have called the "branch out of the root of Jesse," shall build up the church of God in the world, and shall be both Priest and King, and that the heathens shall come and assist in this work of building it.

The same prophet declares also, "that Christ should come to Jerusalem as the king of Zion, and bringing salvation, riding upon a colt, the foal of an ass." Zech ix. ver. 10, which was fully fulfilled, as may be seen in the twenty-first chapter of Matthew and the twelfth of John.

There is also a remarkable prophecy in Zechariah, which is generally referred to the remission of sins to be obtained through Jesus Christ. "In that Day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and uncleanness." Zech. xiii. In the same chapter the sufferings of our Lord are described; "Awake, oh sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts. Smite the shepherd and the sheep shall be scattered;" which was fulfilled when he was betrayed, and all his disciples fled, and is referred to by our Lord himself on that occasion. The same prophet also shews that he should be "sold for thirty pieces of silver," which should be given "to the potter." Zech. xi. This the prophet speaks as prophesying the Messiah, which had been often done before by David. It was fulfilled when Judas betrayed our Lord for thirty pieces of silver, which were afterwards laid out in the potter's field. Matt. xxvii. Zechariah intimates also the manner of his death, viz. that he "should be pierced."

The prophet Malachi expresses the word of God as, chap. iii. "Behold I will send my messenger" (namely John the baptist) "and he shall prepare the way before me." The

the way before me. And the Lord whom ye see shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant whom" you delight in. "And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; and he shall purify the sons of Levi, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness."

Job, though not of the Jewish nation, has a remarkable prophecy concerning Christ: "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand the latter day upon the earth; and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." This prophecy will be fulfilled when our Lord Christ, who lives in heaven, shall come to raise the dead and judge the earth.

From this long rank of prophecies we see that from the fall of Adam God, who fore-knows all things, raised up a continued succession of prophets who foretold the coming of some great and glorious deliverer, who should be in due time manifested to the world, and restore us to that state of purity and happiness from which Adam fell, and by his transgression shut out all his posterity. This glorious Personage, this blessed Redeemer, has accordingly, in all ages of the world, been expected by those good men who were best acquainted with the Scriptures, and particularly in the age when Christ lived.

Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, evidently expected him. We are told, being filled with the Holy Ghost, he prophesied upon the birth

Christ, saying, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he hath visited and redeemed his people, and hath raised up a horn of salvation to us in the house of his servant David; as he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began." Simeon also, a just and devout man, to whom it had been revealed that he should see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ, when our blessed Lord was brought by his mother to the temple to be circumcised according to the law, entered the temple, and being filled with the Holy Ghost, took the child Jesus in his arms, and blessed God and said, "Lord now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people, a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the Glory of thy people Israel. At the same instant also one Anna, a prophetess, who was of a great age, and departed not from the temple, but served God with fasting and prayer day and night, came in, and gave thanks also to the Lord (for the fulfilment of the promise) and spoke of Jesus to all them that looked for redemption in Israel.

Many other examples might be brought forward to prove how earnestly a Messiah was expected by the Jews; and when we see how exactly the character of this promised Messiah, drawn by so many prophets in different ages agreed in all respects with our Lord Jesus, we can only wonder that the Jews were so blind and stubborn as to resist the evidence of so many concurring testimonies: but
St,

St. Paul tells, that "Blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles" be in. Representing the Jews under the similitude of an olive tree he says, "and if some of the branches be broken off, and those" (alluding to the Gentiles) "being a wild olive tree were grafted in among them, and with them partakers of the root and fatness of the olive tree, boast not thou against the branches. — Because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not high minded, but fear." A useful caution to us all, with which I cannot do better than conclude.



Many other examples might be brought to show how carefully the Messiah was expected by the Jews; and how exactly the character of the promised Messiah, drawn by so many prophecies, is fulfilled in all respects by our Lord Jesus. We can only wonder that the Jews should have been so blind and stubborn as to refuse to believe in him, and thus to reject the evidence of so many convincing testimonies: but